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SCIENCE

FRIDAY, JULY 5, 1912

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DISEASE CARRIERS¹

THE past two decades have witnessed many notable achievements in medicine, chief among which, as regards the infectious diseases, stand the discovery of the curative sera, and the more recent discovery of specific chemical agents for the treatment and cure of disease. The real, ultimate goal toward which the research work bearing on human and animal infections points is, and must be, the cure of the afflicted. No royal road leads to the desired end, but instead numberless trails must be blazed which too often lead seemingly to nowhere. While the crowning achievement, the direct conquest of disease, is the aim, the investigator from the beginning has endeavored to accomplish essentially the same result by preventive means. The search for the cause of disease, the recognition of the portals of entry and exit, the perfecting of methods of disinfection, and the development of preventive inoculation served to build up a fairly effective basis for prophylaxis. These methods would, indeed, have sufficed had the earlier views regarding the spread of disease been correct. The general knowledge regarding the highly contagious diseases made it seem probable that all infections were spread, more or less directly, from the sick to the healthy, and as a result preventive measures were applied to the patient and to his immediate surroundings. The outcome, however, was not always satisfactory and the reason is not difficult to see. Fully as

¹ Address of the vice-president and chairman of Section K, American Association for the Advancement of Science, December 29, 1911.